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WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

~~Miss~~ Amy G. Lewis

After a long steady climb of fifty years the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society comes to a mountain top where it is well to pause and get the view. Looking back we see in the distance that little group of eight women in Boston and the two missionaries who went to India, one to teach and one to heal. As they journey we see them joined by others and yet others until a great host of Methodist women in America are eagerly striving to help the women in other lands - that they may know Him. As they realize the unutterable need and the compelling opportunities their gifts increase in a wonderful way and so the steady march of volunteers to the front in far-distant lands is possible. We see the eight become more than 400,000, the two missionaries a thousand, and the gifts increase from $4,586, that first year, to more than $1,300,000. in 1918 with real estate valued at more than $3,000,000.

But we here in American can hardly imagine the significance of this work even if we hear often marvelous tales from those who have seen and return to tell us that "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk....., the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Men, who have scorned the whole enterprise as the weak and crude and quite absurd efforts of missionary women come in their travels abroad upon the results of the work of these years and are convinced-so thoroughly convinced and convicted that they, too, try to tell what they have seen and to compel "the blind" in the churches of America to see what miracles God hath wrought with these scant means.

A few years ago a prominent man in western New York, confessedly such a scorner, was invited by a Methodist Bishop to leave the boat on a river in China to visit a hospital in charge of a Chinese woman doctor - both doctor and hospital the result of our Woman's work. He was amazed at what he saw and told the story of his conversion in the Outlook.

A leading citizen of California was travelling in Japan with his wife who was and is an ardent worker in the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. He, too, confessed his opinion of missionary meetings, but after he had escorted his wife through narrow lanes as well as wider streets in Yokohama to visit various kinds of schools, where Japanese children were studying under Christian influence, after he had seen with his own eyes what Bible women were accomplishing he, too, had a different opinion of missionary work and, it was said, turned a meeting of his club into a missionary meeting with an unusually long missionary address!

In Japan the government welcomes our efforts and several of our schools for girls have received government recognition. In China there is unprecedented welcome to missionary educators. In India the British government has put its stamp of approval upon

many of our schools and gives annual grants of money for their support.

The Isabella Thoburn College - that first college for women in Asia, founded by a wonderful woman and now soon to welcome its new president, Miss Flora Robinson, another leader of the finest type - wins support both in America and in India. A gift of $12,000. from one woman rejoiced Miss Robinson just before she sailed. The British government provides half the cost of the new property.

As we examine the results of fifty years' work we may see not only particular institutions so well founded, so well managed that they pass the close scruting and win the approval and sympathy of the unsympathetic but we find also great social changes that our Woman's work has helped to bring about. Chief of these is the progress in the education of women and her new position. Our mission schools have done pioneer work throughout the Orient. Even in Japan with its excellent school system the earliest schools for girls were for the most part mission schools, and of these - our Methodist school, the Aoyama Jo Gakuin - was among the first dating back to 1874.

One of the first little girls to attend that school in Tokyo, in 1874, came dressed as a boy - so strong was the prejudice in that day against sending girls to school. In all the Orient foreigners were feared. Parents had to be persuaded by gifts to let their children attend our schools, and in most cases the poorer and less fortunate were the ones allowed to come.

In the laboratory of the Mission School the possibility and the desirability of educating women was tested and today schools cannot be established and equipped rapidly enough to meet the demand. Girls from the best homes are eager to attend our schools and the number of applicants is so large that a selection must be made.

The new education of women meant a new woman and the new woman made a new home. There was criticism a plenty, some of it well deserved, for indeed, the schools conducted by westerners did not always pay sufficient attention to the manners of the Orient and many a mother-in-law wondered what sortof creature the new daughter-in-law might be so ignorant of important nicities. But for all that the real worth of the developed mind and the Christian spirit were recognized to such an extent that the all-important matter of marriage was postponed to allow the girls to have an education. The schools, also, gaining by experience are more and more, replacing the tradional curricula with courses of study planned to meet the needs of the students.

The work begun in India in 1870 by Isabella Thoburn, the teacher, and Clara Swain, the doctor, was extended in 1871 to China, in 1874 to Japan, Mexico and South America, in 1880 to Africa, in 1884 to Bulgaria, 1885 to Korea, in 1886 to Italy, in 1887 to

Malaysia, in 1900 to the Philippine Islands, in 1910 to France.

In every one of these countries the Christian school teacher has been at work on human lives, mothering as well as teaching the girls under her charge. Night and day, in sickness and in health, she has tended them with loving care, watching their growth, rejoicing in their success, sorrowing over their failures, hoping, encouraging them to be their best selves. Tens of thousands of girls - many of them from the humblest conditions - thus nurtured have gone out into life and have been passing on to others quietly in their homes and as teachers, and evangelists, doctors, nurses, the spirit of Christ "caught" from the Christian teacher.

In 1918 there were more than 5,500 schools for girls under the direction of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. They are of many types from kindergarten to college and including industrial schools and schools for the deaf and dumb and blind. But whatever is taught they are there in those non-Christian lands that the Christ may transform every student into a living witness for Him.

The evangelistic worker, also, is in almost every country. She works in great cities, travels to remote places, visits in secluded homes, meets women and children of every class from the most wealthy and exclusive to the humblest outcast. She touches larger numbers usually than the teacher but for a briefer period. Often she finds and brings to the school promising children. She supervises and teaches the native Bible women who know and can touch their own sisters as no "foreigner" can do.

The doctors and nurses - would that there were many more of them - have unlimited scope for their utmost skill and endurance. What women in non-Christian lands have suffered - are still suffering - for lack of the simplest remedies is beyond our imagination. We used to telephone our doctor and in less than half an hour have skilled advice in time of need. Lately some of us have learned what is means not to find the doctor ready at our call. Millions of women must face their illnesses, suffer agonies through years with no one to help.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society has all told 21 hospitals, 13 dispensaries, 2 Nurses Training Schools. Some of these hospitals are closed because the doctors have gone beyond their strength in trying to respond to the great needs. All of them need better equipment and more nurses and helpers. But with limited equipment our medical workers have done splendid service and no missionary so quickly wins a place in the lives she hopes to reach with the Christian message as she who enters the home and the hearts in the hour of suffering and brings healing and hope.

All this we see as from our mountain top we look back over fifty years but the joy of mountain climbing is that there is always ahead another peak from which we know there is a wider view. On our birthday we glance back, gather courage and inspiration and then turn our faces up to the heights beyond and behold a glorious new

day just dawning. To be sure there is a hard climb just ahead but we will press forward - our faith supported by experience in the past of faith rewarded.

What do we see ahead? Instead of fear and prejudice to be overcome in every land where we have been, a hearty welcome from governments and peoples awaits the Christian missionary, a confidence and expectancy and eager co-operation. Instead of having to coax and hire folks to lend us their children, we know that parents and children by thousands are pleasing with us to let them have our help. They can no longer be called "rice Christians" who have not only given gladly of their money and their time but who have suffered persecution even unto death for their faith.

Our President, Mrs. McDowell, in the introduction to the Forty-ninth Annual Report - the Jubilee number - gives "the current call from our mission fields" in the following quotations from many sources.

"Japan admits her need today of Christian missionaries and Christian Schools."

"China is in peril today." "China needs Jesus Christ, only He can save us from destruction."

"India is saying "Show us the Christ". "The depressed classes are moving toward Christianity and overwhelming the resources of the church."

"Africa for Mohammed" is the Moslems battle cry as he makes his supreme effort, perhaps his last supreme effort. Shall we not call back, "Africa for Christ?"

"In Latin America instead of the former attitude of distrust there is a new spirit of religious inquiry." "The Panama canal was not created for commerce alone but for the Christian messenger aswell."

"Malaysia calls, "Give us schools and then more schools." "Influences set to work here at the cross roads of the world are felt throughout the orient."

"Within the next years tens of thousands of young people in the Philippines should be led to accept Christ as their living Master."

And she adds, "Europe 's appeal for help at the present time cannot be turned aside. No words will describe it. We name it but we do not pretent to picture it. We must heed their cry."

We quote further from Mrs. Mrs. Dowell:

"The Christian missionaries must go in greater number, with a more living message than ever before. They must go now before the remembrance of this outstretched hand growns dim."......

"The little day schools started by our first missionaries, to which children came almost under compulsion, were but the forerunners of systems of schools with many thousands of pupils attending them. Within a few years there have come into existence Union Colleges for Women of India, China, and Japan, and others will follow. The faces of the children of the world are set toward the school house and these schools must be Christianized."

"We are looking at the home life of the world. We are considering, however, not only the women in the Zenanas. We are trying to create a new type of womanhood and a new type of home. We are trying to make Christian homes by fitting young women to becomes Christian wives and mothers. For the world will never be good without good homes. Our first hospitals were places for the alleviation of suffering. Now our medical program must include extensive preventive work also. Parents must be taught in order that little children may have their right to unmaimed and well-nourished bodies. People must learn that sanitation and cleanliness in homes and streets and cities goalong with godliness; that prevention of sickness is as important as its cure. We are looking at a program for the Christian education of the world far beyond anything which could have found place in the minds of our founders. New and powerful co-operative agencies are at work which were not in the horizon fifty years ago. We are seeing the necessity got making a Christian literature for the whole world, for trained minds cannot be fed on the husks which any literature known to heathendom offers.

There is but one direction for us to go and that is forward. There can be no keeping out of the world currents. The story of the coming years will depend upon our faith and vision as we lay the plans for tomorrow, exactly as the history of the years behind us is related to the faith and the vision and the works of our founders."

What shall be our faith, our vision, our works? As we look out upon a world torn and distressed with such mental and physical suffering as we never known before shall we lose faith, shall we be dazed and confused and blind and cease our efforts before tasks that seem impossible? Surely not. "There is but one direction for us to go and that is forward." We know what is needed. We have, with our own eyes, seen individual lives and communities transformed. The poorest, the lowliest - girls in rich possibilities - lifted, transformed, made happy and useful members of society. We have seen, also, the rich and powerful and seemingly fortunate ones with hearts hungry, lives really empty, sad, bitter,

unsatisfied with things, made glad by this knowledge of the Christ. We, therefore, with new consecration will pursue our aim - "That they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent" - not offering to women who look eagerly out upon a new day, dead doctrine but the Lord of Life. We look upon the present great economic and social struggle and will work and pray for a juster order in which the spirit of Christ may really control us all for we know that mere things will not satisfy - that souls are restless till they rest in Him.

We are happy on our fiftieth birthday because we have been given a part in a great work. With our Church Missionary Centenary and with the Inter-church World Movement we join in faith and work and prayer and go forward with this song;

Be Strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift.
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle; face it. 'Tis God's gift.

Be Strong!

Say not the days are evil,-Who's to blame?
And fold the hands and acquiesce-Oh,shame!
Stand up, speak out, and bravely,in God's name.

Be Strong!

It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long.
Faint not, fight on! To-morrow comes the song.